

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Miller: Dems Scuttle House Republican Measure to Lower Consumers' Electricity Bills



Use Parliamentary Procedure to Shelve Proposal; Squelch Debate on Issue

The liberal Democrat majority in the state House of Representatives turned their backs on Connecticut consumers last Tuesday when they killed a Republican measure that would have lowered electricity bills for most ratepayers, state Representative Lawrence G. Miller, R-122nd District, said today.

The Democrats used a parliamentary procedure to kill the proposal, an amendment to another bill concerning electric distribution companies.

The measure would have reduced the state's gross earnings tax on electricity bills from 6.8 percent to 4 percent for residential customers and from 8.5 percent to 5 percent for commercial customers. The tax is passed on to consumers in their electricity bills.

"Last year a rate increase amounting to 22 percent was approved for Northeast Utilities. United Illuminating also was granted a five percent increase that took effect this year - and an even bigger increase is expected to take effect next year," Representative Miller said. "Before deregulation, Connecticut was among the top ten states in the country in terms of high energy costs. Now, Connecticut is ranked 42nd, according to a study conducted by the Connecticut Business and Industry Association. At the rate we're going, it won't be long before we're ranked number one in the country for high energy costs."

"The New England Economic Partnership estimates that each Connecticut family is paying \$1,773 more for the combined cost of gasoline, natural gas and heating oil than they did last year - and that figure does not include the higher prices we are paying for electricity under the new rates," Representative Miller said. "The bottom line is that Connecticut residents, whose overall tax burden is among the highest in the country, are paying premium prices for energy as well. With a projected budget surplus now estimated at \$600 million, the state could easily afford the revenue loss of \$55 million to \$60 million that our amendment would have saved Connecticut consumers."

"Instead, the state legislature's liberal Democrat majority, who claim to be the working person's friend, used a procedural gimmick to kill our proposal. Their action denied working families relief from high electricity bills that they cannot afford to lose and that state government could easily afford to provide," Representative Miller said. "The liberal Democrats who control the state legislature would sooner cut off one of their hands than

lower the tax burden that is crushing Connecticut residents, poisoning the business climate and killing jobs.”

“The Speaker of the House understands the problem very well. Last November he observed that ‘there are more liberals up in Hartford than I’ve seen in years ... Of 99 Democrats, [only] 16 are moderates,’ ” Representative Miller said.